



King's Research Portal

DOI:

[10.1177/0097700417732561](https://doi.org/10.1177/0097700417732561)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Tsimonis, K. (2018). "Keep the Party Assured and the Youth [Not] Satisfied": The Communist Youth League and Chinese University Students. *MODERN CHINA*, 44(2), 170-207. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0097700417732561>

Citing this paper

Please note that where the full-text provided on King's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

"Keep the Party Assured and the Youth [not] Satisfied": The Communist Youth League and Chinese University Students

Abstract: The Communist Youth League (CYL) has attempted to engage and respond to student interests and demands by expanding its channels for participation, consultation and by deepening its involvement in welfare services provision. Based on qualitative and quantitative research conducted in five universities in Beijing and Zhejiang province, the paper will evaluate the League's engagement with its 'constituency' on campus by bringing together the perspectives of both ordinary students and CYL cadres. Placing this case in a wider discussion on 'authoritarian resilience' that seeks to understand the effectiveness of the Chinese regime's institutional sources of support, the paper will demonstrate that despite initiatives promoting responsiveness, students exhibit an even more cynical stance to both the League's newfound inclusivity and efficiency. CYL cadres occupy weak positions in the academic, generational and political hierarchies on campus, a situation that compromises the League's potential for a renewed and more responsive engagement with students.

Keywords: Youth, CCP, CYL League, Students, Mass Organizations

Introduction

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s attempt to lead a rapidly changing society without losing its monopoly on power has created enormous pressure on its institutions to adapt. As the regime keeps the core of its political system closed to the prospect of liberalization, social pressure for responsiveness has become more intensive in the periphery, and especially to those government and party institutions that are located at the forefront of state and society relations. Chinese citizens in general are outspoken and demanding, while their loyalty to the regime is more conditional than ever, largely depending on the ability of state institutions to offer meaningful and effective responses to their current problems and demands.

The loyalty of Chinese university students in particular constitutes a continuous challenge for the regime. Students are an integral part of economic reforms as the architects, engineers, economists, doctors, researchers etc. of the future. Perhaps more importantly, they are the social group from which the new

middle class and socioeconomic elite will emerge. Therefore it is of no surprise that the regime's relation with university students has attracted scholarly attention. Existing research has focused on nationalistic propaganda, material incentives and control mechanisms that the Party uses to shape student attitudes in a favourable manner to its rule. This body of scholarly work agrees that some combination of increased career opportunities for graduates and authoritarian practices (indoctrination, control, fear of coercion) have tamed, for the time being, this historically important force in Chinese politics by either convincing students on the necessity of the current political arrangement or by leading them to political apathy (Liu, 1996; Chan, 2000; Rosen, 2004; Yan, 2014). This is a causal explanation that also reads as a self-evident proposition. Either way, its negation has been silently postponed until the next round of student protests.

Although it is not possible to predict exactly what will drive students to the streets and when, both Chinese history and the experience of authoritarian regimes elsewhere renders highly unlikely that students will be absent from future contentious politics in the PRC. The Chinese regime is aware of that and has accordingly assigned its main youth organization, the Communist Youth League (CYL, the League), with the task of “keeping the party assured [and] the youth satisfied” (让党放心让青年满意). Perhaps it is hard to think of a more laconic articulation of the challenge ahead. Cultivating legitimacy for the Party requires the League's engagement with the needs and demands of its “constituency” of young people in general and particularly students, and the augmentation of its capacity for responsiveness. In order to achieve that the League needs to expand its work beyond its traditional tasks of indoctrinating, mobilizing, and preparing young people for Party membership, and moderate its formal and bureaucratic outlook and processes to

allow for meaningful participation. The call for a more responsive, youth-oriented, inclusive mode of work is repeated in various youth and League-related publications, and has also entered official Party discourse.

This article will examine the CYL-student interaction on campus in the context of the academic investigation on the institutional pillars of China's 'authoritarian resilience'. Considering explanations that focus on economic performance, nationalist propaganda, and the fear of coercion as insufficient for understanding the stability of the Chinese regime, Nathan (2003) called for a more systematic approach to the role of CCP institutions in the centre (for example regular leadership succession) and the periphery (village elections, consultative channels), in a) decreasing uncertainty in the political process, and b) in providing safety valves that can 'absorb' the social pressures created by the rapid transformation of economy and society. As the ability of the regime to control uncertainty is by definition limited, examining the performance of the main institution in charge of managing the relationship between university students and the CCP is more topical and analytically important than ever.

Of course, the Party has also other mechanisms to co-opt students and sustain their tolerance to its rule; the prospect of a career and economic advancement, preferential access to CCP membership, the nationalistic justification of authoritarianism through propaganda, surveillance, and the underlying threat of coercion. But as Teresa Wright (2010: 176) has noted, citizens below 30 years old (in 2010, 43 percent of population and 20 percent of adults) have no memory of poverty and hardship in the socialist era, and take fast economic growth and material abundance for granted. As a result, appealing to economic development to enhance popular acceptance of the CCP's rule may become a less convincing narrative,

especially as China experiences an economic slowdown (176-7). Likewise, as the reformist regime's commitment to secure employment has long been abandoned, the League cannot offer a loyalty-for-career trade-off, at least not at a mass scale. Individual cadres may pursue the League path to a future career in the Party-state but this is of little relevance to the many who enter an increasingly competitive job market every year. Similarly, nationalism is actively cultivated within the educational system (Zheng, 2012) but often young people have more demanding and critical attitudes on nationalistic grounds than the government is willing to accept, causing tensions and the latter's embarrassment. Lastly, coercion is an important element of authoritarian rule, but it has to be tactical, not ubiquitous, to avoid mass justification of violent resistance. In order to limit reliance on such uncertain factors, the CCP has directed the CYL to increase its engagement with students and provide channels for feedback and responsiveness (Yang, 2009; Li, 2010). With the above in mind, a set of questions arises: does the League provide an institutional 'safety valve' for the Chinese regime, thereby reducing its exposure to uncertainty? Is the League effective in building support by responding to student demands, and by providing incentives to remain engaged with formal political channels? Historically, its ability to do so has been very limited.

Students and the League: an uneasy relationship

The very few investigations of the CYL surround the Cultural Revolution (CR) and the student protests of the second half of the 1980s. In both cases, scholars reported the CYL's systematic lack of responsiveness and failure to appeal to its constituency. Early research on the CYL shows that soon after 1949, the League

transformed into a sluggish bureaucracy resembling little of a revolutionary movement but for symbols and rhetoric (Barnett, 1952; Chao, 1954; Pringsheim, 1962). The CYL “socialized China’s young people to the wrong things” (Montaperto, 1977: 255-8) consistently failing in its representational function (Healy, 1982: 112). John Israel (1967: 4) attributes the League’s fall during the Cultural Revolution to its conservative stance as a party bureaucracy that led radicalized youths to form the Red Guards outside the League. The League appeared as an organization of “little specially privileged persons” (Chou Weiling, 1975:52), which was too close to the Party to “respond dynamically to changing political conditions” (Funnell, 1970: 127). On the contrary, the most radical Red Guards had “bad class” background, which disqualified them from enjoying the special privileges of those with political affiliations in the League and the Party (Blecher and White, 1979: 81; Rosen, 1982: 147; White, 1989: 46-47). Although recent research has contested the view that class background neatly divided conservative from radical groups (Walder, 2009), the CYL’s position as part of the CCP establishment sealed its fate for that period. It only re-emerged as part of the Party effort to reclaim control in the early 1970s (Chou, 1973).

In the 1980s, surveys on student political attitudes revealed a high degree of disassociation with the Party (Liu, 1984; Rosen 1987). Party and CYL officials reported a significant decline in recruitment, accompanied by cynicism and “satirical attitudes” towards CCP membership (Liu, 1984: 88), which created a sense of crisis and a lack of direction for cadres (Rosen, 1987: 3). Thomas Gold (1996: 186-9) noted the regime’s contradictory demands to League cadres, who were called to observe collectivist ideals in a social environment that revered individualism, consumerism and wealth. Cadres neglected political duties and engaged instead in social activities,

parties and outings (Gold, 1996: 191). Jeffrey Wasserstrom and Liu Xinyong (1995: 383-4) showed how campus life in the 1980s provided the organizational groundwork for the 1989 protests as CYL cadres participated in unofficial ‘salons’, societies and groups. Stanley Rosen concluded that the “real threat” for the CCP was previously “committed student cadres who found officially sanctioned organizations irrelevant and therefore created new ones” (Rosen, 1992:188). Indeed, many League cadres were at the forefront of the student movement.

The systematic lack of responsiveness and failure to appeal to its constituency is the major characteristic of the League’s relation with students until 1989. After Tiananmen, the already limited academic interest on the CYL almost disappeared. The few studies that made some reference to the League pointed out that young generations are clearly “success oriented”, openly seeking the “good life” (Liu, 1996: 171; Rosen, 2004: 159), and have very “pragmatic” political attitudes (Chan, 2000). CYL surveys support what has been argued in qualitative terms, namely that students express a very low belief in communist ideals and have rather instrumental attitudes in deciding to acquire political affiliation (Rosen, 2004: 161-170). Yan Xiaojun (2014), examined the League as part of the CCP’s control apparatus on campus, which aims at preventing student mobilization through surveillance, political rituals and material incentives that promote “careerism” and “apoliticism”. He concludes that political apathy has become prevalent among Chinese students and the League’s main role is to cultivate political conformity rather than “ideological devotion and zeal” (Yan, 2014: 511). However, the League has not escaped the regime’s emphasis on responsiveness that characterized institutional developments, especially in the Hu-Wen era. This attempt to “keep the youth satisfied” remains largely unexplored.

Responsiveness and cadre agency

Can the top-down introduction of a new mandate for responsiveness improve the performance of Party organizations? Responsiveness does not only require accurate information on social conditions and a mandate to act accordingly, but also appropriate incentives and training, specific goals and expectations, as well as suitable norms and methods of work that enable cadres to carry out their new tasks. Expanding a mandate without empowering the people who are going to carry it out will at best produce limited and reversible results. The League's mandate has been broadened significantly since the early 1990s. Nowadays, the CYL administers national programmes on graduate employment, entrepreneurship, youth psychology and welfare, charities, sports and recreation, environmental conservation etc. (Wang and Zhao, 2009; Xi and Liu, 2009). Individually driven initiatives have also increased the League's activities, such as with the creation of the China Youth Development Foundation by Xu Yongguang, which established the biggest Chinese charity, the CYL-sponsored Project Hope (希望工程). Still, League cadres and educators press for more inclusive patterns of work (Zou, 2008), innovation in theory and practice (Li, 2008; Fu, 2008), greater representation of young people's opinions and interests (Min, 2004), and are critical of initiatives that involve fanfare but no substance (Zheng, 2008).

The challenges involved in "keeping the party assured, [and] the youth satisfied" in the reform era are similar to those faced by the Workers Union (ACFTU) and the Women's Federation (ACWF). China's mass organizations (MOs) are under the pressure of often-conflicting demands from the Party and society, what has been described as a "social nutcracker" (White et al, 1996: 45). They are at the forefront of

state-society relations due to their extensive organizational presence and their mandate to act as channels of the regime's communication with different social groups. The Party expects from MOs to cultivate support for its developmental policies, and partly address the social issues and demands that these policies have created. Cadres have responded by redefining and expanding their mandate. Researchers have recorded many instances of cadres organizing projects promoting women's rights (Howell, 2000; Jin, 2001; Chow, Zhang and Wang, 2004), assisting workers in industrial negotiations and welfare demands (Howell, 1998; Chan, 2000; Ogden, 2000), and introducing a disabled-assistance agenda at the work of the national and local governments (Kohrman, 2005). The mandate and impetus for more responsiveness by cadres exists, but ultimately it is the interplay between structural constraints and agency in each particular case that determines the outcome. Consequently, despite many important ACWF initiatives in the central and local levels (Hershatter, 2004; Chow, Zhang and Wang, 2004; Gao, 2011; Angeloff and Lieber, 2012), success is compromised by CCP patriarchy and an economic model that has created structural limitations and disadvantages for women's rights. Similarly, the ability of Unions to become more responsive to workers and maintain industrial peace differs between localities, sectors and types of enterprises and relies greatly on the commitment and skills of individual Union cadres (Chan, 2000; Zhu and Chan, 2005; Howell, 2006).

The League faces a similar contradiction of having to increase its responsiveness to students without changing its relation to the Party. This paper will appraise the League's effectiveness in doing so by examining its work on campus. Particular attention will be paid to the structural constraints that League cadres face

and the incapacitating effect that their generationally, academically and politically junior position has on their ability to “keep the youth satisfied”.

Findings and methodology

The following pages examine the League-student interaction combining the perspectives of both sides. Regarding the former, all the CYL organizations visited exhibited common low capacity to engage with students in a more responsive manner as both leading and ordinary (student) cadres face important disincentives and obstacles in renewing the League’s work on campus. The local CYL committee leaders are university employees and Party committee members, thus their work priorities reflect the CCP cadre evaluation criteria: party recruitment and political work measured in numbers and frequency of meetings and activities. CYL committee leaders have little incentive to experiment with new work patterns that may divert focus from core political functions. Student cadres on the other hand, could be agents of renewal, yet they are integrated in a very unfavourable manner in the academic, generational and political hierarchies present on campus, a situation that limits their initiative and scope for autonomous action.

Further, the CYL on campus lacks its own resources, while its work priorities and majority of activities are directed to areas unrelated to student welfare, as the League is mainly preoccupied with the political and administrative tasks assigned by the Party committee and school authorities. When the League is involved in student affairs it is always from a junior, subordinate position. The League occasionally assists school authorities in organizing training activities, such as interview skills for students, but it has no autonomous role in student welfare. Even its social and

volunteer activities pursue a Lei Feng-styled didactic agenda with little appeal to students. In addition, the CYL in its interaction with student societies assumes the role of the supervisory and regulating arm of the Party committee, thereby strengthening its identity as a party agency rather than a youth organization, and limiting the potential of socializing its cadres with new methods of work and ways to engage students. With very little space for autonomous activities, political and administrative matters dominate the League's agenda and frontline interaction with students, thereby augmenting the problem of its "relevance". The paper records isolated initiatives for pro-youth action and instances of responsiveness but also that the impetus for their institutionalization is low.

This study also discusses the findings of surveys conducted on campuses in Beijing and Zhejiang. The League is trying to expand its involvement in areas relevant to students, but according to the surveys, students remain sceptical regarding its capacity for responsiveness and require more attention to their interests and needs. The League maintains a form of engagement with students that is largely ceremonial and passive. The surveys record an apathetic and cynical stance to CYL processes as well as critical attitudes to the League's claim to represent student interests. Ultimately, the League's formal and bureaucratic work patterns discourage participation.

The choice of urban and rural locations where fieldwork was conducted aimed at assessing the CYL's work in rather favourable economic and social conditions where material constraints did not incapacitate campus-based organizations. The qualitative data for this study was collected from an elite comprehensive university (CU1) and two specialised universities (SU1 and SU2) in Beijing, a vocational study college (ZJ1) and a technical university (ZJ2) in Zhejiang province, and include semi-

structured, in-depth interviews with CYL cadres¹, personal observation during visits on the campuses, and the collection of organizational documentation on activities and work reports. Opinion surveys were carried out in the institutions CU1, SU2 and ZJ1. The paper will begin with an examination of the League's membership, cadreship and activities on campus. It will then continue with a discussion of the survey data on student participation in the League.

Joining the League

What is the meaning of being a League member? Official rhetoric echoes traditional paternalistic attitudes towards young people, emphasizing their presumed "duties" to party and nation. The CYL's discourse emphasizes its role as a "school of communism", as a "reserve force of the party" and as an organization whose members need to be morally instructed and politically groomed (Fu and Yang, 2001; Yang, 2009). Throughout this paper it will be argued that the League has operationalized the concept of "youth" as equivalent to "junior" in all aspects of its work. The first, and perhaps most discernible, expression of this is the overtly arbitrary age range of membership, from 15 to 28 years old, grouping together adolescents with young professionals, whose only commonality is their "junior" political status. The CYL's treatment of its members as "advanced" yet "junior" individuals directs the majority of its work to preparation for CCP membership, which remains the ultimate expression of political maturity. The notion of League membership as a junior political condition, informs virtually all aspects of the League's organisational life, hindering its ability to develop effective pro-constituency work on campus and beyond.

Standard entrance into the CYL starts at the age of 15 and involves the following criteria: 1) achievement in school, 2) correct thinking (expressed mainly through the application essay), and 3) proper behaviour towards teachers and fellow students. Initially a small group of students enters the League (around 3 percent) and increases progressively in the subsequent years. By the senior 3rd grade the large majority of students in schools in urban centres are already members, unless someone is not willing to join or, as a former secondary school teacher and league cadre explained, a student is “really backwards” (太落后). (Interview 1) In the countryside League membership is more exclusive (Interviews 2 and 3), an indication of the CCP’s preference for urbanites. The very formalistic application process (Yang, 2009: 273), is also indicative of the notion of juniority embedded in the League’s discourse: a ‘school’, an ‘aide’, an organization of individuals that need to raise their political consciousness, abilities and skills. For example, an application essay reads as follows:

I am an ordinary young person and as every other youth, I have ideals and aspirations, yearning for a better future, but I need to have a guiding light, and the League is a navigation mark on the road ahead (...) The Chinese Communist Youth League is the mass organization of advanced youth, the school of communism, the CCP's powerful aide. The League was personally built and nurtured by the great leader Chairman Mao (...) [League members] should train themselves to raise their socialist consciousness; become educated workers; love the motherland; be true to the people; have knowledge, discipline and a robust body; be hard-working, courageous, vibrant (...)

An applicant is formally accepted after a background evaluation and the completion of a probation period that can last from six months to one year, during which they are monitored through attendance in CYL sessions, seminars, school

events and volunteer activities. Joining the League does not affect one's life in high school nor does it provide any material or other benefits. "Outstanding" (优秀) members may still get free or easier access to university departments with Party oriented subjects, such as Marxism, but the already low demand for these subjects renders this motive of little importance. (Interviews 2 and 4) Nowadays, non-membership is not a stigma, nor is it accompanied by sanctions. When asked to reflect on their decision to join the League, the interviewees often noted that at this age one perceives the passage from being a Young Pioneer (the CCP's organisation for children) to the League as an honour (荣誉). Joining the League is "something you do at school", an indication that you grew up, a ritual not easily distinguished from the education system and other "rites of passage" in one's road to adulthood. (Interviews 1, 5, 6)

In university, the most straightforward co-optation function of the CYL is the automatic membership offered to first year students following the completion of a short period of military training (军训). Junxun was initiated after the student uprising of 1989 in an attempt to instil patriotism (爱国家) and 'love for the Party' (爱党) in the new generation of students (Rosen, 1993: 317-319). Junxun is compulsory for all freshmen, League members and non-members alike, and it includes basic and not physically or otherwise demanding military drills, marching and political lectures. The duration of junxun varies among schools and it ranges from one to four weeks. Both automatic membership and the junxun aim at co-opting the largest number of students possible by indoctrinating them as junior participants in the formal political process and opening the road to Party membership.

League membership for university students is not accompanied by any particular benefits and its importance for later employment in the wider public sector

is relevant only to the degree that it is supportive for the Party enrolment process. The interviewees, when asked about the motives for someone to join the League, pointed out to career (“前途”, “生涯”) and conformity concerns (“是一个传统”, “没有实际的意义”), while a minority also mentioned patriotism and serving society as reasons. The survey results (figure 1) support the findings of the interviews, demonstrating pragmatic and conformist attitudes (responses 1 and 2) as significantly more common than idealistic reasons (3 and 4). Interestingly, joining for the “prestige” (response 5) associated with League membership, a main motive for high school students, is faring relatively low in university. In the past, non-membership would be considered a politically deviant choice, minimising one’s chances for Party membership and career advancement, but now those who do not wish to be involved in formal politics can freely abstain.

[FIGURE 1]

Figure 1: What is the main motive for young people joining the League?

Interestingly, if we compare the students’ motives for joining the CYL to those for Party membership² (figure 2), in both cases only a minority demonstrated ideological reasons whereas the majority of students are either apathetic or have a utilitarian attitude.

[FIGURE 2]

Figure 2: Is joining the Party important to you?

Overall, becoming a League member in reformist China is a formalistic process that reproduces the notion of ‘youth’ as a politically junior identity. It is more accurate to say that Chinese university students decide whether to decline League membership rather than whether to join, and most choose to do so as a result of conformity-related and utilitarian considerations. In fact, demands for compulsory participation to League ceremonies and activities that are an integral part of life in high school, are reduced significantly in frequency and intensity in university, where apart from paying the League fee, membership can be rather nominal.

Grassroots League committees and cadres

The League’s organization on campus resembles closely that of a *danwei* Party committee and follows the academic structure, from class and grade (班级, 年级) to the university level. In the latter, the League committee is organised in different offices/departments, which despite slight variations in their titles between colleges, perform the following major tasks: 1) the Organisation Department (组织部), which is in charge of personnel files and issues, i.e. recommending and selecting cadres and leaders and monitoring the Party application process, 2) the Propaganda Department (宣传部), in charge of the League’s newspaper, online and paper publications, posters, and announcements, 3) the Societies Department (社团部), which administers and monitors Student Societies, 4) the Volunteer’s Department (志愿者部), essentially in charge of student mobilisation, and finally 5) an Activities Department (活动部 or 文化体育部). CU1 in Beijing also has a General Department (综合部) to coordinate League work across school, and an office for young researchers and graduate students

(Document 1). The SU1 committee has a public relations department (外联部) to attract donations for League activities. In large institutions, the offices are replicated in the college/faculty level where a League sub-committee (分团委) exists. (Interviews 7, 8, 9, 10)

The “laoshi”

A common characteristic in all universities visited was the central position of the ‘teacher’, *laoshi* (老师), in the League hierarchy. The term *laoshi*, is used by students as an honorific form of addressing academic and administrative personnel. In the League, the term refers mainly to teachers (and occasionally administrators) who occupy leading positions (Secretary, Vice-Secretary) of CYL committees (团委). These individuals are members of the corresponding Party committee who have passed the age limit of 28, and their posts are unpaid and part-time. The number of full-time League cadres varies greatly among different universities; for example, in CU1 in Beijing there are 6 full-time cadres, while in ZJ2 there is none. The average of full-time cadres is 1 to 2 per campus, usually the university secretary and vice-secretary. Their salaries are paid by the university according to the original contract of employment (teaching or administration).

Internally, the central position of the *laoshi* is explained by their role in administering the CCP membership preparatory process on campus -- the League’s core political function. Their double authority as teachers and CCP committee, in conjunction with a lack of objective criteria that characterises the regulations for cadre promotion, work assignment and awards³, create fertile conditions for favouritism. Indeed, interviewees often mentioned the impression (印象) a student

gives to the laoshi as a more important element for distributing awards and work allocations than measurable criteria like GPA⁴.

Apart from favouritism, the central position of teachers also allows the Michelsian phenomenon of vested interests resulting in goal displacement to appear. The laoshi, a traditionally respected and unified body of authority in the eyes of students (Liu, 2006: 155), often pursue their own agendas in a way that even obstructs the routine function of the League. Perhaps the most illustrative example of this is their ability to manipulate the organisation for careerist reasons and engage in ‘turf’ wars. In SU1, after the position of the university League secretary became vacant, two teachers with previously unresolved personal differences and common career targets competed behind the scenes bitterly to assume it. A CYL secretary position is an opportunity to exhibit leadership skills and be considered for future promotion. The Solomontian solution of the university CCP committee was to assign one as the secretary and the other as the vice secretary. Although the secretary is in a higher position they are both appointed by and only answering to the Party Committee. Due to their unwillingness to cooperate, a classic turf war started that divided the League, the Student Union, Student Societies and, occasionally, students into two different camps. The secretary and the vice-secretary embargoed each other’s activities and used favors to gain student support, such as simplifying the setting-up of societies, approving activities and promising better grades. Eventually, after two years of infighting, they were both promoted to different posts in the university party administration. (Interviews 7 and 11)

The central position of the laoshi also results in increased arbitrariness in CYL procedures. An SU2 cadre complained that due to lack of connections to the university League committee, the applications for activities from his department

either took too long to be processed and so deadlines were often missed, or they were rejected for no clear reason. To circumvent this problem, they submitted joint applications with departments that had better leverage with the university CYL secretary. Identical applications submitted in two different ways had opposing outcomes as the joint proposal was eventually accepted within a reasonable period of time (Interview 8).

Overall, CYL leaders on campus are Party committee members who combine political and workplace authority and therefore control decision making within the organization. Their tenure is short (approximately 3-4 years) and serves as a stepping-stone for higher posts in the Party. Leading cadres should be distinguished from ordinary cadres who are routinely recruited among students.

Student cadres

There are no consistently applied rules and procedures on student cadre recruitment. These range from “closed” processes in which students are approached by a laoshi and then are assigned cadreship, to open calls for interviews and elections among pre-selected candidates. In all campuses visited, interviewees explained that a student wishing to become a cadre “needs to be noticed” by the laoshi and go through a process that involves an interview and a trial period of usually one year. Selection usually takes place in the first two years of study. Student cadres occupy lower positions in the different levels of the League’s structure within the university (up to faculty vice-secretary), staffing its various offices and acting as assistants of the laoshi in charge. (Interviews 5, 12, 13,14)

Why would a student choose to become a League cadre, especially if we take into consideration the heavy coursework and study load in a Chinese academic

institution? Interviewees cited three sets of potential benefits for student cadres, namely: Party membership; the prospect of career advancement; and opportunities for social life. Concerning the first, one of the main functions of the League is acting as a “school for communism”, preparing its members and cadres for Party membership. In this process student cadreship experience can be helpful for one’s Party entrance (入党) review. Nowadays, however, as the Party is actively seeking to recruit “advanced youth”, Party membership is open to any student willing to go through the application process (Interviews 2 and 15). Secondly, although League cadreship is just one among various gateways to the Party, it is still considered by students as potentially helpful for a political-bureaucratic career. League cadreship experience can add some weight for job applications to state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and the wider public sector (for example media corporations), as equal to an internship. In addition, cadres with the proper qualifications and/or connections may work full time for local League committees. Particularly for those pursuing a career in the Party-state, various studies have revealed that the CYL can offer a fast-track (at least by Chinese standards) promotion path and a gateway to government administration (Kou and Tsai, 2014). The League also serves as a space where leadership networks and individual loyalties are formed (Bo, 2004). In provincial and sub-provincial levels, Kou Chien-Wen (2007) has shown that the League road to career advancement is becoming increasingly effective as evidenced by the large numbers of CYL cadres promoted to provincial Party secretary and vice secretary positions. Also a study on the benefits of participation in Beijing-backed youth organisations in Macau reached similar conclusions (Tam, 2008). Although it has been argued that “going the way up” through the Party road is losing importance in comparison to the more materially rewarding opportunities in the private sector (Rosen, 2004), the attractiveness of a job

through the League-Party path should not be underestimated, especially under conditions of intensive competition in the job market.

Finally, a third and more immediate reason for a student to become a cadre is social life. The caricature of a cadre as a bureaucrat in a grey office rubber stamping documents may not be very far from reality, as the majority of League cadres described their work as an “office job”, comprised mainly of administrative duties. Indeed, in all campuses surveyed, the League was considered a more formal and less exciting organisation to get involved with in comparison to the Student Union and Student Societies -another indication of the League’s wider challenge of remaining relevant by updating its form and substance of work. However, a student cadre has opportunities to socialise with their colleagues and, occasionally, occupy themselves with creative and entertaining activities. The teamwork involved even in political tasks, offers pleasant breaks from the solitude of long study hours in the library and is a motive for participation. To conclude, student cadres are chosen mainly through the subjective criteria of League secretaries and their role is to assist the latter. The context in which they operate allows little space for initiative, and this, as we will examine next, affects the content of League activities on campus.

League activities

The confined geography of the Chinese university, with its introvert and orderly campus life creates favourable conditions for the League’s engagement with its members. Nonetheless, the CYL’s student ‘constituency’ is more diverse than ever. Chinese students are fashion and trend conscious, follow mainstream and various youth subcultures, seek recreation, and organize their own societies. In this

context, the League attempts to remain relevant to students through its activities and services. The range of League activities on campus mirrors the challenge of balancing a multi-faced identity as a junior Party bureaucracy and as an organisation seeking to engage and be responsive to students. Despite their multiple nature, for analytical reasons the League's activities are here categorised in three groups: 1) political, 2) student oriented, 3) volunteer.

Political work

The CYL's political work includes political study, propaganda activities, and the supervision of student organizations on campus. The first is mainly addressed to CCP membership applicants and takes the form of policy document group study and talks by Party cadres⁵. Their frequency varies among institutions, approximately once a month for a study session and once or twice a semester for a lecture, and participation is usually obligatory for applicants. Propaganda activities include public singing of patriotic songs and flag-raising ceremonies that are usually on a voluntary basis⁶, as well as the dissemination of political messages through posters, banners, the university League newspaper and internet channels.

The CYL's political tasks also include the supervision of campus organisations, notably the Student Union and student societies, acting as the incorporating mechanism of the Party. It should be noted that the presence of these organizations creates conditions of competition for the League to appeal to students and involve them in its activities.

From the university down to the class level the Student Union is placed under the "leadership" (领导) or "guidance" (指导) of the CYL, terms which refer to a relationship of dependency⁷. The League controls the Union either by involving it in

political activities (as in CU1), or through an additional “coordinating” office (called 团学联 in SU2), or even by completely taking over its daily work (the case of ZJ2). The Union organizes independently recreational activities and cadres have described their work as creative, active and lively, whereas League work is regarded as formal, political and monotonous⁸ (Interviews 6, 16, 17, 18). In addition, SU cadre appointments and activities at each level require permission by the corresponding League level secretary, a process that is not standardised and quite often depends on the arbitrary decision of an individual⁹.

Student Societies (SSoc) are part of an expanding associational space (195 in CU1 and 42 in ZJ1) that the state wishes to control, and the League has assumed the responsibility of monitoring, regulating and reporting on their activities. The regulatory framework in place for the establishment and supervision of student societies resembles the 1998 “Regulations for registration and management of social organisations” (Pei, 1998; Ma, 2002) and has been described by students as “complex and time-consuming” (复杂费时). Despite local variations, League committees have specialised departments¹⁰ (学生社团部门, or 社团工作部门) that supervise the establishment, growth and activities of societies. In addition, the League co-opts their organizers by involving them in training sessions and discussion ‘salons’. Every year societies recruit new members and must submit an annual report on membership and activities to the League in order to maintain their right to operate. (Interviews 10, 17, 19, 20)

The student union and societies undermine the CYL’s appeal to students in two ways. First, they accentuate the problem of the League’s ‘relevance’ as they offer an alternative for more diverse and meaningful activities than the CYL’s formalistic organizational life. Secondly, their presence reinforces the CYL’s dependency to the

CCP as League organizations assume supervisory duties on its behalf. As a result, rather than creating conditions for renewal through competition and interaction with organizations that are closer to student interests and preferences, the CYL's position vis-à-vis the students union and societies sustains its existing patterns of work as an agent of the Party.

Not surprisingly, the CYL's political work is the least popular among students and student cadres alike (also Liu, 2006: 148). The informal categorization of events by some interviewees is very characteristic in this regard. One explained that “in the League we have the leadership (领导性) activities and those that students like (学生喜欢的)” (Interview 21), and another distinguished between the political activities that characterized as a “duty” (任务) from those that are “fun” (快乐) (Interview 11). Cadres complained repeatedly about a lack of balance in the League's work, with political and administration duties leaving little time for other type of activities. Indeed, the political calendar of the year is heavy. On May 1st, May 4th, October 1st etc.¹¹, League cadres organise ceremonies and parades. In addition, they participate in routine political meetings, CCP membership preparation sessions, and carry out the miscellaneous chores ordered by the Party committee. If one also considers the heavy academic workload with its four examination periods annually, there is limited time and energy left for cadres to engage in non-political work.

“Serving the students”

Cadres mentioned sporadic examples of pro-student initiatives. At SU1, cadres reported freshers' concerns about a module that was subsequently revised and simplified as well as problems with hot water in the students' dormitories and accessibility to the campus (Interviews 13 and 22). In CU1 and SU2 the League

participates in the committee responsible for monitoring the catering services offered by the canteen (食堂委员会), collecting student feedback and negotiating with management to lower prices and improve quality¹². In CU1, the League and the Union jointly proposed that a building designated for demolition should be turned into an activity centre for student societies instead of administration offices (Interview 19). Similarly, in SU1, League cadres transferred students' demands for a new, bigger library building (Interview 8), while in ZJ1 they achieved the extension of the school's infirmary operating hours. Also in ZJ1, cadres mentioned that the League passed student feedback on to university authorities regarding sports facilities, internet speed and mobile phone signal on campus (Interview 23). League committees are also involved in study support for weak students (Interviews 7 and 24). These examples demonstrate that the bottom-up impetus for responsiveness exists and cadres are generally sympathetic to student demands. However, the CYL's work priorities limit the commitment, ability and time available of cadres to routinely carry out representative roles. This is equally evident in the League's non-political activities.

The League's student-oriented activities are typically organized into three areas: registry, careers services, sports and recreation. Firstly, the League is in charge of student affairs offices that also offer registry services with cadres performing secretarial duties. In all universities visited, the same space was also used as the headquarters of League committees and the volunteers. The office provides applications for the formation of Student Societies and activities, issues student certificates for various purposes¹³ and collects applications for school events. Also every September, League cadres are actively involved in enrolment and induction. The League is at an advantageous position to provide registry-style services due to its

access to student files and the free labour of cadres. What is more, the administration of student affairs serves political purposes. At the time of fieldwork, the CU1 League Organisation Office was about to launch a new service, providing certified records of extra-curricular activities for students, such as volunteer work, membership in organisations and awards received, to be used in applications for further study or employment upon graduation. The cadre in charge commented that this was a response to student demand (Interview 19) but, of course, the self-reporting of extra-curricular and extra-League activities involved in certification also expands the committee's monitoring capacity.

A second area of student-oriented activities is employment, the main concern of Chinese graduates today. The League has turned much of its attention to this field by administering national initiatives, notably the 'Go West' Program (西部计划), microfinance schemes for rural youth and job fairs for graduates, including projects organised by local governments (Wang and Zhao, 2009; Xi and Liu, 2009). On campus, CYL committees are involved in skills-enhancement and job-search strategy seminars (writing a CV and interview preparation), internship programs, and "career days". Often, such events are organized by the university/college or local governments with the League assisting in administration¹⁴.

A third category of student-oriented activities is recreation, which includes singing contests, parties, museum visits, sports competitions, cultural festivals and excursions. As a rule of thumb, the League carries out more formal events and the Student Union focuses on entertainment. As one League cadre described it: "the SU activities are of [a] casual (随便) nature while those organised by the League are more serious, have deeper meaning and are quite formal" (Interview 12). However, in order to appeal to students, university League also run recreational activities

independently or in collaboration with other organisations, such as the Student Union and the Women's Federation. At college/university level such activities follow a minimum Party protocol, blending political ceremony -even a "light" version of it- with "fun"¹⁵. In general, student-oriented activities are infrequent and as we will see in the second half of this paper, this is a major complaint from students and cadres alike.

Volunteers

From a Western perspective, "volunteerism" (志愿注意) in China is ambiguous due to the central role of the state (Ma, 2006; Hustinx, Handy and Cnaan, 2012) and the inclusion of activities not traditionally associated with the term¹⁶. On campus, apart from mobilization for large-scale events such as the 2008 Olympics and the 2010 EXPO, volunteerism includes charity and blood donation drives, visits to nursing homes and migrant schools, cleaning of public spaces, participation in environmental projects, AIDS and birth control awareness campaigns¹⁷. Can this type of volunteerism transform the League's priorities and functions, similarly to the ACWF that delineated a distinct area of social work in women's rights? Unfortunately, the League's volunteer activities are organized in a top-down fashion, serving didactic rather than social purposes, and are implemented in a fragmented manner.

Volunteer activities are directed by the CCP committee, the university or the local government. They are on the "must-do" list of a university League organization and are reported in annual reviews. Although this guarantees that such activities will take place, their effectiveness depends on the degree of ingenuity, expertise and dedication of cadres. More often than not, these requirements are not met and

grassroots committees organise activities rather perfunctorily, without a clear purpose. In one indicative case in Beijing, the League Committee cleans the city's botanical gardens on an annual basis, despite the fact there is no apparent need for it as its premises are cared for daily by the gardens' staff. Similar cleaning drives take place on campuses throughout the country, demonstrating the participants' selflessness rather than serving hygienic purposes, as universities have sanitation personnel on site.

Overall, League volunteerism promotes a Lei Feng-fashioned altruism and the notion of "serving the people" in general, rather than a particular constituency. This normative context emphasizes the educational value for volunteers, but neglects making an actual and meaningful contribution. As a result, local campus branches do not develop long-term projects that would require some form of specialization and commitment of resources and time. Instead, they are involved in unsustainable projects with little impact. Finally, League committees on different campuses maintain remarkably low levels of communication with each other and with social organizations. The League occasionally cooperates with state-sponsored organizations, such as the Red Cross Committee, but even such examples are rare (Interviews 12, 17, 25). The CYL interacts almost entirely with Party and university authorities as a junior partner that can offer free labour and a youthful outlook to events. In conclusion, the form of the League's voluntary work on campus and the processes followed are not an indication of the local League organisations' greater autonomy, but rather the opposite.

The view from below: the League's evaluation by students

The remaining pages of this paper will analyze the students' views on the CYL's performance on campus as recorded in surveys conducted in three locations. It will begin with the findings on the League's organizational life and student participation and will conclude with an evaluation of the League's involvement in student welfare and its degree of responsiveness.

Organizational life and participation

Elections on campus exist only at the grassroots-level for the branch (class) secretary, who represents their class in the departmental League meeting. The position of the secretary is open annually for election among CYL members but, as discussed earlier, it involves interference of the teacher in charge, which may take the form of candidate pre-selection, or even open support for a nominee. When asked to comment on the best manner to select cadres (figure 3), the majority of respondents chose elections as the most preferred process, either without any interference by the laoshi, or involving a post-election ratification. The view that a more "wise" input is necessary was often recorded during the interviews, perhaps explained as the habitual effect of long-term socialization with the CCP's discourse and top-down processes.

[FIGURE 3]

Still, the surveys demonstrated that students wish to have a say in the selection of branch secretary and are critical to appointments behind closed doors. Participation of students in grass-roots level elections for League branch secretaries is relatively high (CU1 48.9%, SU2 71.7%, ZJ1: 74.3%), as it takes place during lecture hours when the majority of League members are present. When students were also asked if they would participate in direct League cadre elections (at any level) should they be

given this opportunity, results were similarly high (sum of responses “yes I will” and “probably I will” CU1: 61.4%, SU1:76.3% and ZJ1:84%).

In an organisation where cadre promotion depends on decisions made at higher levels, accountability to the base is weak. Grassroots cadres are rewarded not through re-election but through appointment in the departmental or university level League Committees. In theory, cadre accountability is assessed through reports to the members of the branch and peer evaluation. Provisions for transparency in League affairs and consultation with members are in place; however, students exhibited a wide lack of knowledge of these processes (table 1 answer: “I don’t know” = DK). Even when moving from the more outward CU1 institution towards the more isolated ZJ1, which is located in a remote, less urbanized area, with a more introvert school life, the responses indicating a lack of awareness concerning processes and criteria that should be met, remained high, while in the case of the institutions visited in Beijing the combined “No” and “I don’t know” answers were always in the majority.

[TABLE 1]

Regarding participation, table 2 shows that in all universities surveyed, around one third of students chose to abstain completely from the League’s activities from the first day and throughout their studies¹⁸. Data on participation frequency identifies a core minority group of “loyal” students (2-3 out of 10) that takes part at least once a month, while for the rest frequency ranges from once every three months to two years. It is important to note that the difference between the two Beijing-based institutions and ZJ1 is considerable as the latter’s remote location and small size enable its League organization to mobilize students more frequently.

[TABLE 2]

The online attitudes of respondents revealed a similar pattern. Students were asked to comment on university League websites. The results exhibited an unexpectedly high proportion of students that had never visited the CYL website (CU1 81.5% and SU1 67.6%), with corresponding negative perceptions regarding its content (80.9% and 73.7% respectively). Further questions on the frequency of visits revealed that only 4.9% of students in the two universities accessed the website at least once a week, and 12.8% and 21.8% respectively at least once a month. The two websites contain practical information on student affairs (student activities, forms for student society registration, Party membership application, announcements for training, etc.).

The survey attempted to identify the extent to which the participation of students in League activities corresponds to preferences and perceived usefulness. Table 3 compares League activities students participate in, to those they prefer and perceive as useful. Political study sessions and moral education classes, which are obligatory for those wishing to pursue Party membership, drain much of the cadres' time and energy. These political activities are less welcomed and perceived as less useful by students. This is more evident in CU1 (comparing the 26.1 percent participation rate to a mere 4.4 percent preference and 7.9 percent usefulness perception) and SU2, but also in ZJ1, the difference is considerable.

[TABLE 3]

Lack of correspondence between actual participation and preference or usefulness exists in almost all categories of activities, with the exception of cultural and recreational events that the CYL usually co-organises with other organisations on campus. As argued also in qualitative terms, the organisation's political priorities divert time and resources from activities that are more relevant to student interests and

needs. Job-hunting training offers an example of a central policy priority that is only partially implemented by the League as a result of its uneven distribution of resources and time. The relatively low participation in job-hunting skills training is not due to a lack of demand; in fact in terms of preference and usefulness these events rate quite high. This disparity is explained by the relatively small supply of activities in this area by an organisation that has other priorities in its day-to-day work.

The League in student welfare and representation

Regarding the League's ability to intervene, promote and solve study and campus life related issues the proportion of students who answered "very useful" and "somehow useful" was low in the Beijing-based academic establishments. The evaluation of the League improved in the Zhejiang vocational school, where the League and the Student Union act as one unit. For comparison, respondents were also asked to comment on the SU and Societies' ability to assist them with the same issues. The Union has fewer resources available and it does not perform registry services as the League does. Furthermore, Union cadres described their work as of recreational nature, not as advocating on behalf of students. Nevertheless, the Student Union fared better than the League in terms of responsiveness in all campuses surveyed (combined "very useful" and "somehow useful" responses).

[TABLE 4]

Similarly, Student Societies were evaluated more positively than the League, with the exception of ZJ1 where setting up and running a society is restricted and their number is smaller. In Beijing, student societies do not carry a mandate for representation within the organisational system on campus, but by being less political and more oriented to student recreation and interests they are also perceived as more

helpful in dealing with study and student-life related issues. Interestingly, despite being in a politically stronger institutional position to serve its constituency, the evaluation of the League's responsiveness is lower than organisations with little or no formal mandate and capacity to respond (table 4). Not surprisingly, only a very small percentage of students would turn to the League as their first choice if they required organisational backing and assistance. For the large majority of students in Beijing-based academic establishments, and approximately half of the students at the Zhejiang College, the League's usefulness is limited to administrative affairs (table 5).

[TABLE 5]

Beyond campus

The League sends representatives to the People's Congresses and People's Political Consultative Conferences, the two formal institutions that have the potential to function as representative bodies in all levels of government. Table 6 focuses on the League's representative capacity towards the city and central governments.

The number of students who strongly believe in the League's representational capacity is quite low (4.2%, 4.5% and 6% respectively). Negative responses are prevalent regarding the League's representational role towards the city (CU1 64.1%, SU2 54.2%) and central governments (CU1: 58.8%, SU2: 47.1%), a finding also supported by the interviews. Apart from the various negative personal opinions that were expressed by students and recorded through interviews or personal observation, it is worth noting that not even a single interviewee could provide an example of youth policy/legislation proposed by the League that was implemented by city or central government authorities. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that an exceptionally high percentage of students in all universities surveyed agreed with the

statement “The CYL needs to strengthen its youth work,” (86.1%, 91.9% and 89.6%, respectively).

[TABLE 6]

Next, respondents were asked to evaluate the League’s performance on issues that affect them the most, identifying employment as the most important problem of their constituency (table 7). Of course, the League cannot solve the problem of unemployment; therefore, the question here concerns its role in assisting through training and skills programs, job fairs, internship placement schemes and other initiatives that the CYL is administering.

[TABLE 7]

The surveys revealed that only a small minority of students views the League as very effective in assisting young people to deal with the problem of graduate unemployment, the second area of work after politics where the CYL in all levels devotes much of its attention and resources. If we add the “somehow effective” responses, the overall percentage remains lower than 50%. Still, this rate is not low, demonstrating that the CYL has not failed to identify the main concern of its key constituency of students, who in turn recognize its efforts. But graduate unemployment is rising and the Chinese government’s plans, in which the CYL is involved, can only respond to it partially. As unemployment is a key factor affecting public attitudes towards government effectiveness, we can assume that student perceptions on the League’s contribution are going to be directly affected by the regime’s overall performance in this area.

In conclusion, the final part of the survey invited respondents to provide views and suggestions. These responses were grouped in five categories as displayed in

table 8. Although the majority of students chose not to reply to this open-ended question, the comments collected sustain the overall picture that arises from the aforementioned qualitative and quantitative data. The responses showed that: 1) students call for more frequent and impactful activities (*“carry out more meaningful activities”*, *“organize activities that are useful for the students”*¹⁹), 2) criticize formalism (*“become more humane, not always judge according to formal standards”*, *“don’t be so red and single-minded”*, *“the League should not have the hypocritical behavior of doing things on the surface and only in words, but needs to do some practical work”*²⁰), 3) request that League cadres communicate more with students (*“get to know the demands of young people, strengthen communication and understanding, change pattern and way of work”*, *“communicate more and reach the students, don’t be so capitalist”*²¹), 4) want more responsiveness to bottom-up demands (*“listen to the opinions of the students, serve the students”*, *“represent the interests of members, respond with enthusiasm to demands”*²²), and finally 5) ask for a more open, fair, transparent and inclusive style of work (*“league affairs need to be open, fair and transparent”*, *“I hope that the league can enable more students to understand what this organization is and why it exists”*, *“For ordinary people the League keeps the door closed...let there be more light, being a member does not only mean paying the membership fee”*²³).

[TABLE 8]

To sum up, the surveys recorded student attitudes at the end of China’s ‘golden decade’, a period of unprecedented wealth and political stability. Evidently, the antithetical dynamics of the “youth Party agency” and the “youth organization” are at play in every aspect of the League’s grass-roots representation work on campus, with the former being prevalent. Thus, despite recognizing the CYL’s efforts in the

sphere of employment, students remain critical of the processes followed and the degree of responsiveness attained. The result is a feeling of increasing disassociation with formal political life, which students in China share with their peers elsewhere. This disassociation currently takes the form of apathy expressed as passive participation or abstention.

Conclusion

The League's pronounced commitment to "keeping the youth satisfied" cannot be dismissed as mere "Party talk" (党话). The examination of the League's work on campus demonstrates that the regime recognizes some of the wide and complex challenges students face today (especially with regards to employment), and realizes that cultivating political loyalty depends on responding to at least some of these issues. It also reveals, however, a particular combination of factors that prevents cadres from engaging with students in a more substantive and less formalistic manner. Dependence on the local CCP committee is the first factor which ensures that CYL's tasks are largely defined through the regime's political priorities. The corresponding Party committee controls cadre selection and promotion, finances, offices, materials and funds for specific activities, and this is translated to the Party's strong ability to direct form, content and timing of League work.

The literature on China's mass organizations shows that social pressure often prompts cadres to take pro-constituency action and renegotiate dependency. However, League committees operate in a context of 'juniority' that further reduces autonomy and the prospect of bottom up cadre agency renewing the CYL's interaction with students. League cadres on campus are embedded in academic and generational

hierarchies that inhibit their ability for pro-student action. They are placed in a position of institutional weakness to negotiate internally with the committee leaders, who, as university employees, occupy positions of multifaceted authority: political, academic, generational. Their short tenure and the absence of pro-student work norms further accentuate the impact of 'juniority', which prevents cadres from circumventing the context of dependence. Ultimately, dependence and juniority have a clear limiting effect on how cadres perceive their duties and role vis-à-vis their constituency. This is evident in the rather formalistic way the League communicates with young people, in its cold treatment of student societies, and in the many outdated norms and methods of work followed. Student views recorded in the surveys fall in line with the qualitative findings of this paper.

The first implication of this investigation concerns the issue of the institutionalization of channels for representation and responsiveness as a means of cultivating legitimacy for the regime. Examining this aspect is crucial in order to understand the complex relationship between the state and students, especially since the effectiveness of alternative means of fostering support, notably by appealing to economic growth, nationalism, and offering a path to secure employment, are all conditioned by dynamics beyond the control of the League or, even the CCP. The alternative is to cultivate support through institutional responsiveness, by providing processes for meaningful and voluntary participation and specialized services. From this perspective, the regime's front line youth organization does not provide institutional means where young people can resort to raise their issues and have reasonable expectations of an effective response. This investigation showed that at best, the League can sustain the passive participation of students who consider

conformity and docility as a more appealing option than a declared ‘exit’ from formal politics.

As the League’s often-proclaimed aspiration to act as a channel for “keeping the youth satisfied” has yet to materialize, the regime is left with an unreliable mechanism for sustaining students engaged with formal politics in a manner that cultivates support to the regime and loyalty to its institutions. The CYL cannot absorb the impact of unforeseeable crises (in foreign policy, economic downturn or recession) and public perceptions on corruption, bad governance and inequality, to students’ tolerance or support for the regime. Ironically, despite the transformation of economic, political and societal contexts in the last 50 years, the socialization of China’s younger generations with the political system is still mediated through an institution that can do little more than mobilize “voluntary” labour in periods of stability. During the Cultural Revolution and the student protests of late 1980s the CYL was ineffective in lessening discontent and promoting loyalty to the CCP. Similarly today, the CYL’s low institutionalization of channels for representation and capacity for responsiveness means that tensions and grievances with the regime are unlikely to be diffused through institutional means. On the contrary, the League’s standing as a ceremonious and anachronistic political organization with weak ability for pro-constituency action is likely to further substantiate and popularize cynical attitudes among students towards the formal political process.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my supervisor, Professor Julia Strauss, for her patient guidance and comments on previous drafts of this paper. I am grateful to Professor Kathryn Bernhardt and two anonymous reviewers for a very constructive and timely review process. This paper has also benefited from suggestions and comments received during presentations at the Lau China Institute, King’s College London (15 October 2014) and at the ‘Political participation in Asia Conference’, Stockholm University (22-24 November 2015). All errors and mistakes remain mine.

Funding

Research for this paper was supported by the AG Leventis Foundation and the Universities' China Committee in London.

REFERENCES

ANGELOFF, TANIA, AND LIEBER MARYLENE (2012) "Equality, Did You Say? Chinese feminism after 30 years of reforms", *China Perspectives*, 4: 17.

BO, ZHIYUE (2004) "Hu Jintao and the CCP's ideology: A historical perspective", *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 9 (2): 27-45.

BARNETT, A.D. (1952), "Mass Political Organization in Communist China", *The Annals of the American Academy*.

BLECHER, MARK AND WHITE, GORDON (1979) "Micropolitics in Contemporary China: a Technical Unit During and After the Cultural Revolution", NY: Sharpe.

CHAN, ANITA (2000) "Chinese Trade Unions and Workplace Relations in State Owned and Joint-venture Enterprises", pp. 34-56, in Warner, M. (ed.), *Changing Workplace Relations in the Chinese Economy*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Chao Kuo-Chun (1954) "Mass Organizations in Mainland China", *The American Political Science Review*, 48 (3).

CHOU, WEILING (1975) "Planning the ACFTU, ACWF, CYL Congresses", *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 11 (8).

CHOU, WEIWANG (1973) "Status of Provincial CYL Committees", *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 10 (1).

CHOW, ESTHER NGAN-LING, ZHANG NAIHUA, AND WANG JINLING (2004) "Promising and Contested Fields: Women's Studies and Sociology of Women/Gender in Contemporary China", *Gender and Society*, 18 (2): 161-188.

DOCUMENT 1 - CU1 University League Committee Members and Organization (CU1 daxue tuanwei ren yuan jigou jieshao)

DOCUMENT 2 – ZJ1 University League Committee Organizational Structure (ZJ1 xueyuantuanwei zuzhi jianshe)

DOCUMENT 3 – SU2 League Cadre Awards Criteria (SU2 Youxiu tuanganbu pingxuan tiaojian)

FU ZHONGDAO AND YANG JIANKANG (2001) *Gongqingtuan Jichu Zhishi 1000 wen* [League Basic Knowledge 1000 questions]. Beijing: Zhongguo Qingnian Chubanshe.

FU XIAOJIE (2008) WANG Lihong, "Goujian hexie shehui yu gaoxiao gongqingtan gongzuo chuangxin" [Harmonious Society Construction and Innovation in College Youth League Work] *Zhongguo Huangjing guanli ganbu xueyuan xuebao*, 18 (1).

FUNNELL VICTOR C. (1970) "The Chinese Communist Youth Movement 1949-1966", *China Quarterly*, 42: 105-130.

GAO XIAOXIAN, "From the Heyang Model to the Shaanxi Model: Action Research on Women's Participation in Village Governance", in Evans, Harriet and Strauss, Julia c. (2011) *Gender in Flux: Agency and its Limits in Contemporary China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

GOLD, THOMAS B. (1996) "Youth and the State" in Brian Hook (ed.), *The Individual and the State in China*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

HUSTINX, LESLEY; HANDY, FEMIDA; CNAAN, RAM A (2012). "Student volunteering in China and Canada: comparative perspectives". *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 37 (1): 55-84

HEALY, PAUL MICHAEL (1982) "The Chinese Communist Youth League 1949-1979", Griffith: Griffith Asian Papers

HERSHATTER, GAIL (2004) "State of the field: Women in China's long twentieth century", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 63 (04): 991-1065.

HOWELL, JUDE (1998) "Trade Unions in China, the Challenge of Foreign Capital" pp.150-172, in O' Leavy, Greg (ed.), *Adjusting to Capitalism: Chinese Workers and the State*. New York: Sharpe

HOWELL, JUDE (2000) "Shifting Relationships and Competing Discourses in Post-Mao China: The ACWF and the People's Republic" pp.125-143, in Susie Jacobs, Ruth Jacobson, and Jen Marchbank (eds.), *States of Conflict: Gender, Violence and Resistance*. London: Zed Books.

HOWELL, JUDE (2006) "Research summary 20 –New democratic Trends in China? Reforming the All-China Federation of Trade Unions", Institute of Development Studies, Centre for the Future State, June 2006.

INTERVIEW 1 - League committee secretary, employee in public company (former teacher), Beijing, January 2010.

INTERVIEW 2– University League committee cadre, graduate student, November, 2009.

INTERVIEW 3 - League Central Committee & China Youth Rural Entrepreneurs Association departmental vice-director, Beijing, October 2009.

INTERVIEW 4 - Beijing Youth League Committee & Young Volunteers Federation vice-secretary, employee in local government, Beijing, January 2010.

INTERVIEW 5 - Former League branch secretary, employee in a foreign company, Beijing, October 2009.

INTERVIEW 6 – Student union cadre, student, Beijing, November 2009.

INTERVIEW 7 - League branch secretary, student, Beijing, November 2009.

INTERVIEW 8 - Student Union president and university committee cadre, student, Beijing, February 2010.

INTERVIEW 9 - Departmental League secretary, teacher, Zhejiang, May 2010.

INTERVIEW 10 - University Committee vice-secretary, teacher, Zhejiang, May 2010.

INTERVIEW 11 - Department League committee cadre, student, Beijing, November 2009.

INTERVIEW 12 - College League committee cadre(1), student, Beijing, October 2009.

INTERVIEW 13 - College League committee cadre (2), student, Beijing, October 2009.

INTERVIEW 14 - College League committee vice-secretary, student, Beijing, October 2009.

INTERVIEW 15 - Beijing district committee member and Volunteer Federation cadre, local government employee, Beijing, February 2010.

INTERVIEW 16 - Student union cadre, student, Beijing, October 2009.

INTERVIEW 17 - College League committee cadre, graduate student, Beijing, February 2010.

INTERVIEW 18 - University League committee secretary, university administrator, Zhejiang, May 2010.

INTERVIEW 19 - University League committee cadre, full-time in CYL and graduate student, Beijing November 2009.

INTERVIEW 20 - Student Union President, student, Zhejiang, May 2010.

INTERVIEW 21 - University League committee secretary, university administrator (2), Zhejiang, May 2010.

INTERVIEW 22 - College League committee cadre (3), student, Beijing, October 2009.

INTERVIEW 23 - Departmental League committee vice-secretary, student, Zhejiang, May 2010.

INTERVIEW 24 - Departmental League committee secretary, student, Zhejiang, May 2010.

INTERVIEW 25 - Departmental League secretary (2), teacher, Zhejiang, May 2010.

ISRAEL, JOHN (1967) "The Red Guards in Historical Perspective: Continuity and Change in the Chinese Youth Movement", *China Quarterly*, No. 30, April-June.

JIN, YIHONG (2001) "The All China Women's Federation: Challenges and Trends", pp. 123-140, in Ping-Chun Hsiung, Maria Jaschok, Cecilia Milwertz, and Red Chan (eds.), *Chinese Women Organizing: Cadres, Feminists, Muslims, Queers*. Oxford: Berg.

KOHRMAN, MATTHEW (2005) *Bodies of Difference: Experiences of Disability and Institutional Advocacy in the Making of Modern China*. United States: University of California Press.

KOU CHIEN-WEN (2007) 'Hu Jintao shidai tuan xi ganbu de jueqi: paixi kaoliang vs. ganbu shusong de zuzhi renwu [CYL Cadre s Rising in the Era of Hu Jintao: Factional Networking or Organization's Mission] *Yuanjing Jijin Hui Jikan*, 8 (4).

KOU, CHIEN-WEN AND TSAI, WEN- HSUAN (2014) "'Sprinting with small Steps' towards promotion: Solutions for the age dilemma in the CCP cadre appointment system", *The China Journal*, 71: 153-171.

- LI JIERAN (2008) *Gaoxiao gongqingtuan gongzuo fazhande youxiao tujing* [Approaches to development of youth work in colleges and universities]. Hebei keji shifan xueyuan xuebao, Vol. 7 (1).
- LI YUQI (2010) *Zhongguo Gongqingtuan Shigao* [History of the CYL]. Beijing: Zhongguo Qingnian Chubanshe.
- LIU, ALAN P. (1984), "Opinions and Attitudes of Youth in the People's Republic of China", *Asian Survey*, 24 (9).
- LIU, ALLAN P. L. (1996) *Mass politics in the People's Republic: State and society in Contemporary China*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- LIU, JUNYUAN (2006) 'Chinese College Students' PP. 145-163, in Xi Jieying, Sun Yunxiao and Xiao, Jingjian (eds), *Chinese Youth in Transition*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing.
- MA, QUISHI (2002) "The Governance of NGOs in China Since 1978: How Much Autonomy?" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 31 (3):305-328.
- MIN XIAOYI (2004) "Gongqingtuan daibiao zui guangda qingnian de liyi" [The CYL represents the widest interests of the youth] *Shanghai Youth* (March 7).
- MONTAPERTO, RONALD NICHOLAS (1977) "The Chinese Communist Youth League and the Political Socialization of Chinese Youth", University of Michigan, PhD thesis.
- NATHAN, ANDREW (2003) "Authoritarian resilience", *Journal of Democracy*, 14 (1): 6-17.
- OGDEN, SUZANNE (2000) "China's Developing Civil Society: Interest Groups, Trade Unions and Associational Pluralism" pp. 263-297, in Warner, M. (ed.), *Changing Workplace Relations in the Chinese Economy*. United States: Palgrave MacMillan.
- PEI, MINXIN (1998) "Chinese Civic Associations: An Empirical Analysis", *Modern China*, 24 (3): 285 - 318.
- PRINGSHEIM, KLAUS (1962) "The Functions of the Chinese Communist Youth Leagues (1920-1949)", *China Quarterly*, (12): 75-91.
- ROSEN, STANLEY (1982) "Red Guard Functionalism and the Cultural Revolution in Guangzhou", Boulder: Westview.
- ROSEN, STANLEY (1987) "Youth Socialization and Political Recruitment in Post-Mao China", *Chinese Law and Government*, Vol. 2 (2): 3-8.
- ROSEN, STANLEY (1992) "Students and the State in China: the Crisis in Ideology and Organization", pp.169-191, in Arthur Lewis Rosenbaum (ed.), *State and Society in China: the Consequences of Reform*. Oxford: Westview Press.
- ROSEN, STANLEY (1993) "The Effect of Post-4 June Re-education Campaigns on Chinese Students", *China Quarterly*, 134: 310-334.
- ROSEN, STANLEY (2004) "The State of Youth/ Youth and the State" in Peter Hayes Gries and Stanley Rosen (eds.), *State and Society in 21st- Century China: Crisis, Contention, and Legitimation* (Asia's Transformations Series). New York: Taylor & Francis.

TAM, DERRICK CHI KUONG (2008) “Political Leadership in Youth Organizations of Macau”, MA thesis, Department of Government and Public Administration, University of Macau.

WANG LIPING AND ZHAO FEI (2009) Gaige kaifang 30nian Gongqingtuan guanli qingshaonian shiwude moshi yu jingyan [Patterns and experiences on the management of youth affairs by the CYL during 30 years of reform and opening up], Qingshaonian Daokan [Teenager’s study].

WALDER, ANDREW G. (2009). *Fractured Rebellion: The Beijing Red Guard Movement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

WASSESTROM, JEFFREY N AND LIU XINYONG (1995), “Student associations and mass movements”, in Davis, Deborah S.; Kraus, Richard; Naughton, Barry; Perry, Elisabeth J. *Urban Spaces in Contemporary China*, NY: Cambridge University Press.

WHITE, GORDON; HOWELL, JUDE AND SHANG XIAOYUAN (1996). *In Search of Civil. Society: Market Reform and Social Change in Contemporary China*. Oxford: Clarendon.

WRIGHT, TERESA (2010) *Accepting Authoritarianism: State- Society Relations in China’s Reform Era*. United States: Stanford University Press.

XI JIEYING AND LIU JUNYAN (2009) Dangdai zhongguo qingnian quanyi zhuangkuang yanjiu baogao [Research report on the rights of modern Chinese youth]. Beijing: Yanjiu chubanshe.

YANG JIANKANG (2009) (ed.), Tuanwei gongzuo zhidaoshouce [League Committee Work Instruction Manual]. Beijing: Zhongguo Qingnian Chubanshe.

YAN, XIAOJUN (2014) “Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in Post-Deng China”, *China Quarterly*, 218: 493-513.

ZHENG CHANGZHONG (2008) Guanxi kongjian zaizao de zhengzhi luoji —— Qingnian zhongxin jianshe yu zhengdang qingnian jichu zhong zhu [The political logic of rebuilding the spatial relationship: Establishing Youth Centers and rebuilding the basis of Party youth] *Fudai Qingnian Yanjiu*, Vol.1.

ZHENG WANG (2012), *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, New York: Columbia University Press.

ZHU XIAOYANG AND ANITA CHAN (2005), “Staff and Workers Representative Congress: an institutionalized channel for Expression on employees interests?”, *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*, 37 (4).

ZOU XINGLI (2008), “Gaoxiao gongqingtuan gongzuo ying shixian liuge zhuanbian [The work of the CYL in colleges and universities must achieve the 6 transformations], *Jingjishi*, 1.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Main motive for young people joining the League

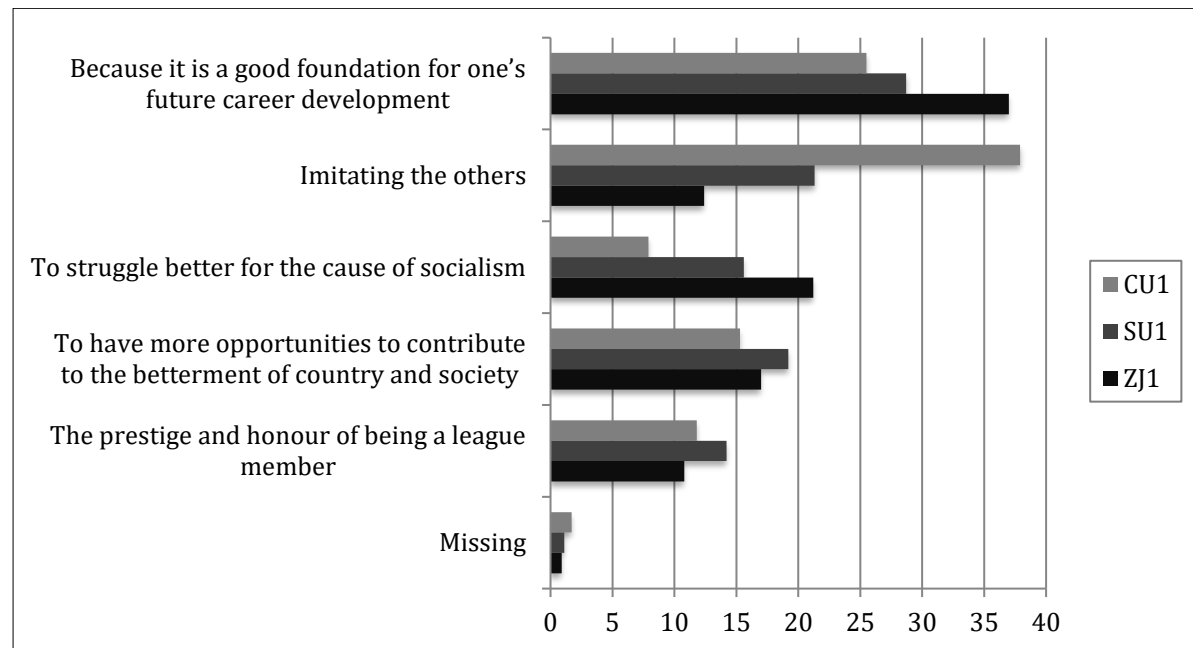


Figure 2: Is joining the Party important to you?

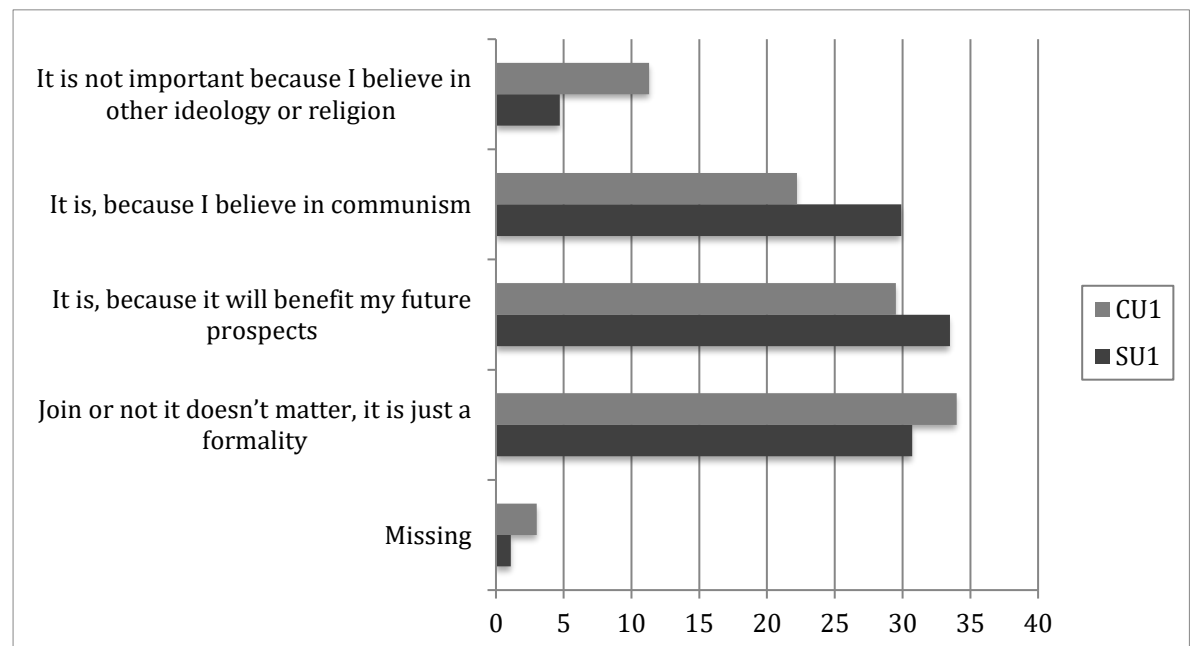
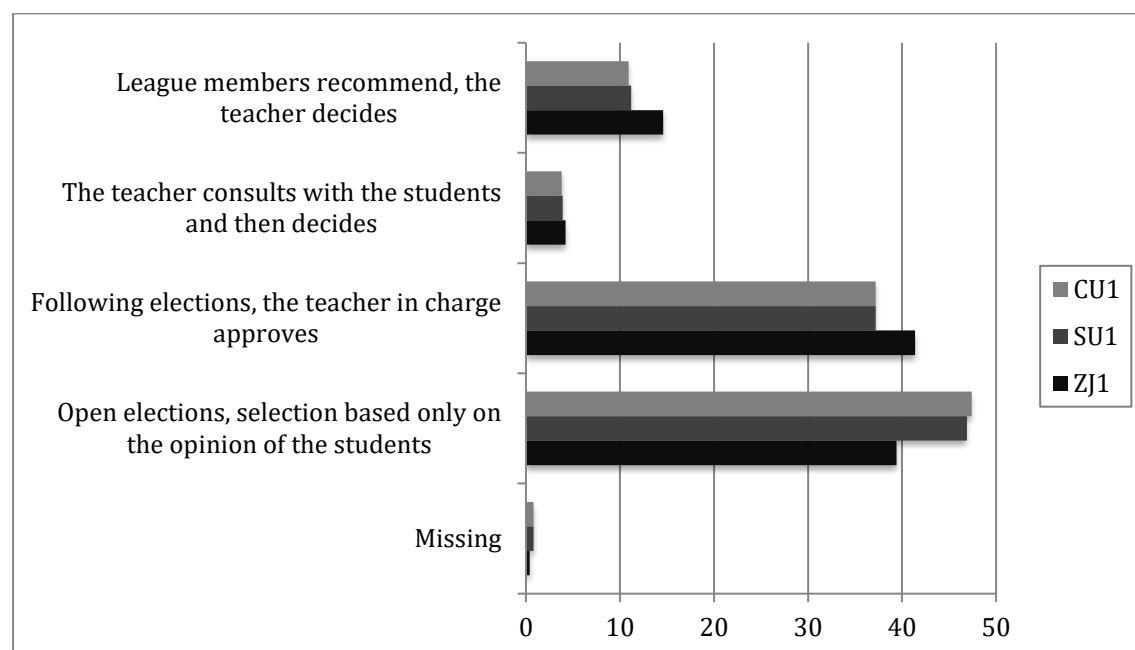


Figure 3: How should CYL cadres be appointed?



LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 1 – Does your League branch follow these processes?</i>	<i>CU1</i>			<i>SU2</i>			<i>ZJI</i>		
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>DK</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>DK</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>DK</i>
Responses (%):									
1. Nomination of candidates from the members	37.3	15	43.2	49.9	19.8	25.8	56.6	15.1	22.6
2. League affairs are open/transparent	35.5	13	47.1	47.9	15.9	30.9	53.5	10.9	30.7
3. Cadres regularly submit reports on their work to the members	29.5	15.6	50	38.9	19.2	36.9	56.2	10.8	27.6
4. Members are consulted before major decisions	35.2	9.8	50.6	38.9	19.2	36.9	56.2	10.8	27.6

Table 2 Have you participated in CYL events after entering university?			
<i>Replies (%)</i> :	<i>CU1</i>	<i>SU2</i>	<i>ZJ1</i>
1. No	37.5	31.2	30.3
2. Yes	61.9	66.8	67.9
Missing	.6	2	1.8
-How often?			
1.At least once a month	19	19.4	33.6
2.Once every 3 months	15.4	17.6	10
3.Once every semester	16.3	12.6	9.3
4.Once a year	8.0	8.7	4.9
5.Once every two years	2.4	2.5	0.9
6.Other	0.8	6.8	9.2

Table 3 CYL activities that students...	...participate in			...prefer			...consider useful		
<i>Replies (%)</i>	<i>CU1</i>	<i>SU2</i>	<i>ZJ1</i>	<i>CU1</i>	<i>SU2</i>	<i>ZJ1</i>	<i>CU1</i>	<i>SU2</i>	<i>ZJ1</i>
1.Professional skills	15.7	14.3	23.2	29.5	32.9	38.5	41.8	50.7	64.6
2.Job-hunting skills	10.9	11.7	25.4	23.7	32.4	33.4	38.1	46.5	56.8
3.Sports	20.1	28.5	34.3	35.6	38.1	42	19.5	20.6	20.3
4.Political study sessions	26.1	27.4	39.1	4.4	8.7	14.1	7.9	14.8	22.8
5.Culture & recreation	46.5	51.2	42.5	66.8	71.2	72.1	36.4	36.9	30.5
6.Basic moral education	14.2	18.7	34.3	3.2	9.3	20.1	5.9	13.9	37.6

Table 4 How useful are the following organisations in helping you with...		Study-related issues			Student life - related issues		
<i>Replies (%)</i> :		<i>CU1</i>	<i>SU2</i>	<i>ZJ1</i>	<i>CU1</i>	<i>SU2</i>	<i>ZJ1</i>
C Y L	1. Very useful	4.5	9.1	18.1	5.1	9	13.1
	2. Somehow useful	18.1	26	42.2	27.5	26.8	36.5
	3. Not very useful	49.1	47.6	28.5	41.2	44.6	35.6
	4. Not useful at all	25.7	15.1	10.2	24	18.4	13.3
	Missing	2.6	2.2	1.1	2.1	1.3	1.5
S U	1. Very useful	4.1	13.1	18.1	4.8	12	14.1
	2. Somehow useful	26.6	34	43.1	30.5	37.5	40.9
	3. Not very useful	43.4	36.7	27.9	40.5	35.4	30.7
	4. Not useful at all	23.3	14.2	9.5	21.9	13.5	12.6
	Missing	2.7	2	1.5	2.3	1.6	1.8
S S O C	1. Very useful	7.3	13.7	10.2	7.6	11.8	9.9
	2. Somehow useful	34.9	38.4	35.4	31.6	34.3	29.7
	3. Not very useful	38.1	32.8	36.1	40.6	36.4	37.6
	4. Not useful at all	16.5	12.6	15.7	17.5	15.1	19.7
	Missing	3.3	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.4	3.1

<i>Table 5- If you require the assistance of an organisation to deal with a problem, will you turn to the League?</i>				
<i>Replies (%)</i> :		<i>CU1</i>	<i>SU2</i>	<i>ZJ1</i>
1. Yes I will, it is my first choice		4.2	4.4	6
2. Yes I will, but I will try to find another solution first		25.7	32	44.2
3. No, unless it is for an administrative issue		68.7	61.7	48
Missing		1.4	1.9	1.8

Table 6- Beyond the campus	<i>CU1</i>				<i>SU2</i>				<i>ZJI</i>			
<i>Replies (%)</i> :	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
The CYL can effectively represent my interests, opinions & demands towards the <u>central</u> government	5.7	33.8	42.9	15.9	16.4	35	35.1	12	NA	NA	NA	NA
The CYL can effectively represent my interests, opinions & demands towards the <u>city</u> government	4.8	29.8	47.9	16.2	12.3	31.8	40.8	13.4	NA	NA	NA	NA
The CYL needs to strengthen youth work	27.3	58.8	10.1	2.4	45	46.9	5.4	1.1	46	43.6	8.6	.7
1=I strongly agree, 2=I somehow agree, 3=I somehow disagree, 4=I strongly disagree												

Table 7 What is the most important problem that university students face today?			
<i>Replies (%)</i> :	<i>CU1</i>	<i>SU2</i>	<i>ZJI</i>
Finding a job	78.4	82.4	88
Opportunities for further education	9.2	9	6
Marriage	2.4	2.7	.4
Protection of their rights	5.4	3.5	2.6
Other	3.9	1.3	2.2
Missing	.6	1.3	.9
- How effective is the League in helping young people deal with the problem of finding a job?			
Very Effective	5.4	11.3	10.8
Somehow effective	39.4	30.2	35.4
Not very effective	44.4	44.7	43.2
Not effective at all	8.8	12.3	9.7
Missing	2	1.4	.9

Table 8 Views and suggestions			
<i>Replies (number)</i> :	<i>CU1</i>	<i>SU2</i>	<i>ZJI</i>
Increase number and improve content of activities	24	48	109
Be more practical, less formalistic	16	31	30
Communicate and engage with students more	20	22	51
Be more responsive to the base	33	41	39
More open, transparent, inclusive style of work	12	26	80

¹ The interviewees wished to remain anonymous. Their role in the League, occupation and interview date are recorded here under References.

² This question was not included in the Zhejiang survey due to considerations about the local CYL committee's approval.

³ A document that was made available to the author by an SU2 League cadre, explained the Requirements for League awards. From a total of 12 different criteria referring to three different awards only one was objectively measured, academic performance (Document 3)

⁴ In two instances, award holders explained that common birthplace with a teacher or the student's family connections can be important factors.

⁵ Lectures on Falun Gong, "terrorism", and the 2008 ethnic conflict had been carried out in all universities visited. The author also attended a lecture on the CCP's resilience in comparison to other communist parties.

⁶ ZJ1 college in Zhejiang has a flag raising ceremony once every two weeks when participation is obligatory

⁷ Characteristically, the National Student Union is located in the CYL headquarters in Number 10, Qianmen Dongdajie, Beijing

⁸ In the two colleges where data was made available (SU1, ZJ1), applications for Union cadreship outnumbered those for the League, 4 to 1 and 7 to 3 respectively.

⁹ In SU1 a Union cadre complained that because of the relatively small size of his department the teacher in charge repeatedly blocked applications for recreational activities.

¹⁰ ZJ1 has the College Societies Working Committee (学园社工委) and ZJ2 has formed a Student Associations Committee that is directly subordinated to the Party Committee.

¹¹ League branches also celebrate June 1st (Children's Day) and July 1st (founding of the CCP).

¹² This is an area of frequent tension between students and the management of canteens (Interview 14)

¹³ For instance, the CYL office in CU1 provided the author with a student certificate to facilitate fieldwork in the universities visited.

¹⁴ ZJ1 cadres mentioned the Entrepreneurship Institute (创业园) as an example of the League's involvement in graduate employment, a project run and funded by the School.

¹⁵ In ZJ1, a pop dance event started with a performance based on the revolutionary movie "Song of Youth" (1959).

¹⁶ "Volunteers" also include neighborhood committee patrols and security guards (保安).

¹⁷ Interviewees mentioned that volunteers are involved in the system of online monitoring known as the Five Mao Party (五毛党).

¹⁸ Surveys were held at the end of the academic year, so first year students had one year to participate in CYL events, therefore the result is not distorted by bias due to year of study.

¹⁹ "多开展一些有意义的活动" (SU2), "多举办些对大学生有用的活动" (ZJ1), also: Organize more activities that attract people and are interesting, decrease formalistic activities – "多办吸引人的, 有意义的活动, 少办形式主义的活动" (CU1).

²⁰ "应该更加的人性化,不要总是在形式上做文章" (ZJ1), "不要太红太专" (CU1), "团组织不要做一些表面上, 口头上的虚伪行动, 作一些切合实际的工作" (ZJ1), also: be less formalistic, do more practical work for the students – "少些形式主义,多为学生做些实事" (SU2).

²¹ "了解青年需求, 加强交流, 理解, 转变工作方式和方法" (CU1), "多与学生交流, 深入学生不要太多资本主义" (SU2), also: "communicate more with the students, understand and grasp their mainstream thinking and trends of behavior" – "深入学生群中,了解学生的思想主流,把握学生思想, 行为动向" (ZJ1).

²² "多听学生意见。为同学们服务。" (CU1), "能够代表团员的利益,积极反映其要求" (SU2), also: "strengthen the work of serving youth, activate the enthusiasm of members" – "加强在服务青年方面的作用,调动团员积极性" (ZJ1), "decrease bureaucratism" – "减少官僚主义" (CU1).

²³ "团务公开化,公正化" (SU2), "希望团组织能让大多数团员知道团组织是什么, 它存在的意义" (ZJ1), "团组织对一般人而严总是关着大门的 (...) 希望其能阳光化一些,让我们不只成为只在交团费上有意义的一员"(ZJ1).